

Pigs and Pork in Denmark: Meaning Change, Ideology, and Traditional Foods

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ABSTRACT

This article engages with contemporary meaning and meaning changes within the porcine semantic field in Denmark. More specifically, I argue that pork is acquiring the meaning of Danishness. Analytically, I focus on the relation between language usage in different settings and on how situational usage relates to nationwide, mediatized discourses. The porcine field lends itself readily to such analyses, as pork has been the center of much political and politicized attention over the past decade, and much of the discursive engagement with pork implies or expresses an ideological and moral stance. Interactional data come from field studies in a school, a fine-dining restaurant, and a fast-food restaurant. Media data are sampled from three relatively recent debates on Danish values.

In 2015, I was dining at a friend's place with my family on a Friday in December, which in Denmark is a month dedicated to tradition, home-cooked comfort food, and candlelight. Our host served pork roast with cracklings, sweet and sour red cabbage, red currant jelly, potatoes, and gravy (see fig. 1). Pork roast is generally much loved in Denmark, and with these specific accompaniments it is typical to serve around Christmas. Yet, despite the food's seasonal fit, our host presented it at the table with an agitated disclaimer: "I don't allow the Danish People's Party to monopolize this—it's not their property!"¹ The

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This article is dedicated to Misty Jaffe, without whom this special issue would not have come to fruition. I first presented the data discussed at the 2016 Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association, on a panel titled "Language and the Moral Economy of Food," which Misty and I co-organized. Before she passed away unexpectedly in 2018, Misty put considerable effort into turning this fantastic panel into a special issue. I am glad that we are finally able to honor her efforts by bringing this work into print.

1. In this article, all quotes from Danish sources are presented in English translation. All translations from Danish to English are the author's own.

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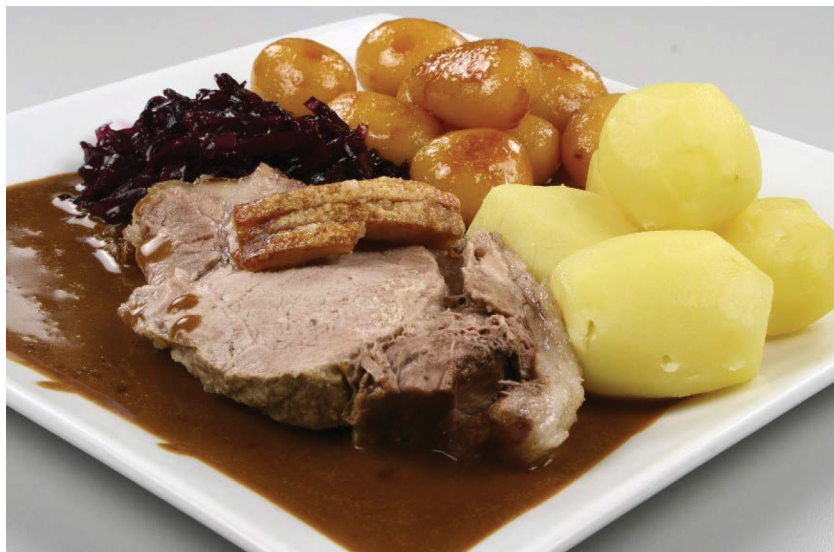


Figure 1. A Danish pork roast dinner (reproduced with permission from Gastrofun, <https://www.gastrofun.dk/opskrift/flaeskesteg-med-det-hele>).

Danish People's Party is an influential, populist party² which aims to return Denmark to an (imagined) past prior to the havoc created by globalization and late modernity in general. Like other contemporary populist-nationalist parties, the Danish People's Party is particularly well-known for its anti-immigration stance. It celebrates a pork-based traditional Danish kitchen as a local specialty. Pork roast with cracklings is often served at the party meetings and is the declared favorite food of the current leader, Kristian Thulesen Dahl. Our friend's outburst constituted a comment about this relation between nationalism and pork. She presented it as common knowledge, but also an uncomfortable social fact; impossible to ignore, but worthy of social erasure. She did not want to be taken hostage by current political discourses in which her food selection could be taken as a sign and an effect of an anti-immigration stance. She articulated verbal resistance to these intrusive indexicalities in order to make the point that she served pork as part of nostalgic seasonal celebrations, a tasty vector presupposing former Christmases and festivals, entailing commensality on this as well as future social events (Sutton 2001; Holtzman 2006). Of course, her distancing could be read as an instance of elite racism through its denial (Van Dijk 1992), for example, "I am not a racist but. . . (I still serve pork)." As a white, well-educated, member of the economic elite, she fits the stereotype of such deniers. And although I, as a

2. The Danish People's Party is the second largest party in the national parliament as of 2019.

long-term friend, know that this was not her intention, her denial still supports the conclusion that the local meaning potential of pork is changing under the influence of sociopolitical currents in Denmark. Pork and Danishness have become so closely associated that pork invites the current exclusionary, nationalist sense of Danishness to enter the social space—even when nothing else in the situation suggests that immigration and immigration-related issues are relevant.

Of course, the contemporary meaning, or meaning potential, of pork is more nuanced: pork indexes, for example, class positions, religious and ethnic identities, political and environmental stances, all of which intersect in various ways. Sometimes pork may even have *bivalent class indexicalities* (Cotter and Valentinsson 2018), pointing to the traditional working class or even the primary pork producer and simultaneously to something most often regarded as its opposite, the upper-class, socially (and food-) concerned person. On other occasions, such oppositional indexicalities do not co-occur, as we will see, but even in those instances the use and meaning of pork is often based on ideological and moral considerations.

In this article, I will focus on some of the contemporary ideologies of pork in Denmark, and on the relations between pork and tradition, nationalism, and other moral orders. I will show how the meaning of pork depends on the local setting and situation, given that meaning is created in context and is a multidimensional phenomenon (Blommaert 2015; Silverstein 1992) rather than a systemic denotational value. At the same time, I will suggest that regardless of local contingencies of context, some meanings gain public traction, which make them hard to ignore, as illustrated by the vignette above. In this way, meaning is influenced by meta-discursive tendencies, and mass media seem to play a decisive role in meaning change. A third point of the article concerns how food discourse is infused with morality. When we consume or do not consume pork, and when we talk about the consumption of pork, we demonstrate a particular stance within a politicized area, as is well-known from the literature (e.g., Coveney [2000] 2006; Karrebæk 2012). I will show how different moral orders related to the same food phenomenon co-exist, sometimes in tension and sometimes in complete accordance with each other (see also Cotter and Valentinsson 2018).

This article builds on a combination of media data and ethnographic data. Participants, that is, speakers and writers, in both sets of data use language to convey meanings and relations. Moral aspects of food are central, and speakers discuss whether there is a special (principled, particular, valuable) relation between pork on the one side and Denmark, the Danish territory, and Danish values, on the other. Sometimes this relation is less obvious, though, and other values are promoted. This article thereby connects the people's situated, everyday lives to a societally pervasive and public discourse, and it adds insight into

sociolinguistic (meaning) change in an era fundamentally influenced by mediatization (Agha 2011; Androutsopoulos 2014).

This article includes three mediatized debates on food and national values. Two of them were initiated by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which has recently engaged in several initiatives to raise people's consciousness about Danishness and Danish values, such as the election of a national dish and the creation of an official canon of Danish values. The third debate was sparked by a municipal council's vote concerning what food to serve children in public daycare. All three debates use much-loved pork-based dishes as entry points to issues of immigration, national cohesion, Danish national culture, etc. In addition, I discuss three ethnographic recordings that show how ideologies and practices relate to pork in people's everyday lives, and thus indirectly to the meaning of pork. The recordings come from a classroom, a high-end restaurant, and a contemporary fast-food restaurant, settings in which food plays widely different roles. Discourses in both of the restaurants exhibit a high degree of reflexivity and multi-voicedness (Bakhtin 1981). This happens not the least as they exploit *authenticity* to market themselves (cf. Johnston and Bauman 2015), at the same time demonstrating how authenticity results from creative invention (Pietikäinen et al. 2016). In contrast, schools are not defined in relation to food, yet students eat there every day. In educational settings characterized by social (ethnic, religious, and cultural) diversity, the inherently cultured phenomena of food receive different and non-compatible interpretations (Karrebæk 2012). These may lead to troublesome situations, and the interpretations available deserve to be treated explicitly and if possible, reconciled.

Food, Meaning, and Meaning Change

Food and language intersect in various ways. Food is a material substance and a means of signification in its own right, but much of people's engagement with food is in fact discursive. Food-related activities (production, distribution, preparation, consumption, etc.) influence discourse in terms of topic, choice of linguistic resources, meaning-making, dominant authority structure (Wilson and Stapleton 2010), and participation framework (Goffman 1981; see detailed discussions on intersections of these features in Gerhardt 2012; Karrebæk et al. 2018). This article focuses on meaning-making through language and food. Meaning is a creative and multidimensional process, and contextualized, indexical understandings often take precedence over denotational meaning in situations of use (Blommaert 2015; Silverstein 1992). Indexical meaning relations are prone to re-interpretation because situational interpretations rely on participants' continuous construal of context, and on their negotiations of which, and how, contextual

dimensions are relevant. New meaning dimensions may be introduced, voluntarily or by accident, explicitly or implicitly, and they may become conventionalized over time. Indexicalities that were once important may continue to be relevant, but in competition with new ones (Silverstein 2003, 194). Understandings may blend, and “this dialectical effect of micro-real-time indexicality must therefore constitute a major vectorial force in formal linguistic change.” (Silverstein 2003, 194). Clearly, the notion and the relation of indexicality presupposes prior contexts of use and anticipates coming situations (Silverstein 2003, 193), thereby relating one situation to other situations through speech chains (Wortham and Reyes 2015). This is, I argue, what happens with regard to pigs and pork in the Danish context. The indexical meaning of pork varies as it is compared to different social formations of signs, or *registers* (Agha 2007). Registers comprise collections of signs which people find to belong together. They are ideas that index social and cultural values, although which values and which meanings may vary from person to person, as may the specific composition of registers. Registers are in a constant process of *enregisterment*, and so what is or isn’t healthy, or what is or isn’t Danish food, and for whom the specific understandings hold, is contestable.

In the following, I will look at variations in indexical meanings of pigs and pork which are related to context construal and at variations that appear to involve more fundamental changes in the meaning potential of pigs and pork. This change in meaning is a *sociolinguistic change* (Androutsopoulos 2014; Coupland 2014b; Coupland et al. 2016; Mortensen 2020), so called because it is constituted equally by and through what is often seen as “language” and what is seen as “social developments” and because it concerns reconfigurations of language-society relations (Mortensen 2020).

Meaning is ideological, that is, vested with moral and normative understandings (e.g., Bakhtin 1981), and ideologies may remain implicit or become articulated explicitly in reflexive metapragmatic discourse. Pork certainly seems to invite such discourse. Articulable cultural values are rationalized and naturalized understandings, connected to moral evaluations—good, bad, normal, deviant, and so on—which contribute to the continuous division of social space (Silverstein 2003, 202; Agha 2007). Gal and Irvine (1995, 2019) discuss three such ideological, semiotic processes, saturated with political and moral stance, and with social effects. *Iconicity*, or *rhematization* (Gal 2005), concerns a transformation of the sign relationship such that sign forms appear to be representations of the social images with which they are linked indexically. The iconic relation is seen as “depicting or displaying a social group’s inherent nature or

essence” which “entails the attribution of necessity to a connection (between linguistic features and social groups) that may be only historical, contingent, or conventional.” (Gal and Irvine 1995, 973). The semiotic process of *recursivity* concerns the projection of an opposition from one level of relationships to another, and *erasure* is the process of simplification where certain elements are rendered invisible, often because they are inconsistent with the dominant ideological scheme (Gal and Irvine 1995, 974). These semiotic processes are central in the porcine field.

In order to comprehend the social potential of this semantic field, we need to consider its embedding in the current societal and political context. Heller (2011; Heller and Duchêne 2012) argues that language is assigned new functions and significance in contemporary neoliberal societies. Products and services gain value, and new meanings, through the formulation of them as authentic, local, or traditional. Authenticity in particular has been subjected to sociolinguistic interest. Authenticity draws on an assemblage of components, including *ontology*—that is, a phenomenon’s intrinsic claims to existence and connection to land; *historicity*—that is, the longevity of a phenomenon, its connections to history and time; *systemic coherence*—that is, the importance and over-all fit within a certain institutional framework; *consensus*—that is, acceptance of value within a constituency (Coupland 2003, 2014a). Furthermore, authenticity both presupposes and entails value. This is probably somehow related to the current social obsession with newness and change (Giddens 1990; Coupland 2014a) and the paradoxical fact that, at the same time, people still long for something stable and genuine. Authenticity works as a way to add trueness, sincerity, originality and grounding to a phenomenon. Yet Pietikäinen and colleagues (2016) argue that at times authenticity is less embedded in a framework of objective, truthful originality. It is created in the here and now, for the sake of a knowing consumer, and is more transactional in nature. This may be the case in many tourist encounters, and in such cases, authenticity may also be the starting point for new discursive meanings, unplanned by the producer. As Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) show, when tourists buy experiences, they appropriate them and make something new out of them. Thus, what we see as connected to authenticity at one point in an analysis may become something else later in a social encounter in order to fit participants’ emerging social aims and needs.

In contemporary society, and in the food world in particular, authenticity is often connected to some degree of eliteness, as discussed by Mapes (2018) and Cotter and Valentinsson (2018). Mapes observes that “food discourse is instrumental in the production of social norms and expectations” (Mapes 2018, 282–83), including norms of elite authenticity, and she identifies five rhetorical strategies, including historicity, simplicity, lowbrow appreciation, and locality/sustainability (plus one

called pioneer spirit, which is not relevant here), through which distinction is accomplished. Mapes argues that “status is established by the appearance of varied, but refined, consumer choices” (267). In fact, elite status is both a precondition for somebody to have the right to authenticate a particular food choice or food establishment (e.g., as a “real” Italian-American, working-class or contemporary restaurant), and part of the goal of being associated with it (Mapes 2018). Cotter and Valentinsson (2018) also show how authenticity is used by an elite to create itself *as* elite within the specialty coffee domain. They point out the paradox that authenticity is used indexically to point to this eliteness at the same time as it points to the other end of the social scale, that is, to the workers producing authentic products, such as specialty coffee: “The ability of specialty coffee talk to index these oppositional positions emerges vis-à-vis class anxieties, which for specialty coffee consumers in North America manifest as an uneasy balance between a tendency toward progressive political orientations, socioeconomic privilege in the global market, and ready consumption of luxury products. The potential contradiction of consuming luxury goods, while maintaining progressive political orientations, is neutralized by an appeal to ‘authentic’ forms of consumption.” (Cotter and Valentinsson 2018, 490). In this way, specialty coffee has *bivalent indexicality*, as it simultaneously points to both ends of a social scale. Conscious exploitation of this bivalence changes the seemingly paradoxical situation to something that makes social sense.

In my data, we certainly find eliteness, tradition, and lower social class indexed through pork. Much more data from different contexts could, and should, be analyzed in order to generate a more comprehensive picture of the understanding and use of “pork” and “pig.” I am not sure that pork is used to create eliteness through pointing to traditional production and values, or what kind of eliteness that could be. However, I do think that the use of pork in elite restaurants is part of the production of a contemporary Danishness, and that the focus on the term of Danishness in these places in turn reinforces the relation of this meaning to pork.

Pigs and Pork

The porcine world is a thoroughly studied area, especially in relation to non-Western settings (for examples, see Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2007). Depending on cultural context, pigs are valued for food; are financial and symbolic capital; or are abominable creatures, subject to taboo (Mizelle 2011). Recently, pigs and pork have been studied from environmental, industrial (Blanchette 2020) or consumer perspectives (Thorslund 2016), most notably in the United States, and pigs and pork have been used as entry points into broader sociological questions.

Specifically, pork has become an icon of industrialization and the human exploitation of animals and environment, not the least because pork is the world's most widely consumed meat (Mizelle 2011, 65) and pigs the most common intensively raised animals (Thorslund 2016). At the same time, pigs are part of many people's everyday professional lives (Blanchette 2020; Horwitz 1998) as they raise, slaughter, sell, and buy pigs, and as they prepare and eat pork. For instance, Weiss (2016) explores small-scale professionals' creation of the non-industrial—or "real"—pigs. He emphasizes how authenticity is created alongside and through the production of an understanding of proximity and less mediated relations between producers, consumers, and pigs. Similarly, Cavanaugh (2007, 2016; Cavanaugh and Shankar 2014) investigates the production of material and symbolic value (including authenticity) and transformations in a neoliberal economy, exemplified through pork-based charcuterie in Bergamo, Italy. She shows how food becomes a marker of cultural continuity and economic possibility. Such work entails struggles concerning who has the right to produce, brand, and market a given product—and whether and how a given product becomes a brand at all. Like Weiss, Cavanaugh discusses the different understandings, here of pigs, pork and salami, which coexist, sometimes in tension, sometimes in open conflict, and at the same time define each other mutually.

Pigs and Pork in Denmark: Societal, Commodified, and Mediatized Meanings

Pigs have probably been central to the Danish diet since the late Stone Age (Boyhuus 1998). Pork can be salted, a good method for preservation in the Danish climate, and the pig was a common domestic animal both inside and outside of cities. The Danish pork industry began its successful adventure in the second half of the nineteenth century by exporting bacon to the United Kingdom, and today Denmark is inhabited by approximately 29 million pigs and 5.5 million humans. The world's largest pork exporter and Europe's largest pork processor is a Danish company (Danish Crown), and Denmark has one of the world's highest per capita consumption rates of pork. It is illustrative that a Danish saying compares the smell of pig manure with the smell of money. At the same time, the large pork business is fighting widespread associations of pork with poor quality, lack of animal welfare, environmental damage, and the rapid spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria (Thorslund 2016). Consumers perceive naturalness as an important part of animal welfare, and pig welfare as an indicator of meat quality. Many consumers want "happy pigs," although this preference may not be reflected in consumers' everyday practices (Thorslund 2016, 8). Pigs are evidence of capitalism gone

too far: they are dangerous to our health and environment, and, at the same time, exploited victims. My local high-end supermarket (Irma) reflects such environmental and animal welfare discourses. At some point, one could choose to donate refundable deposits from recirculated plastic bottles to protect young piglets from getting their tails docked. All unprocessed pork on offer in the supermarket is of Danish origin, in contrast to other types of meat available. Consumers can choose between pork from forest pigs (when available), free-range pigs (ironically labeled “recommended by The Agency for Animal Protection”), and organically raised pigs. So-called conventionally produced pork takes up less and less room in the supermarket fridge. In addition to environmental and animal welfare discourses, the supermarket reflects a discourse of pork as food tradition through the large number of processed pork-based products, which increases around Christmas.

In public discourse, pork is clearly emphasized as a national value. For instance, in 2014, the then-minister of cultural affairs (Dan Jørgensen, a Social Democrat) initiated an official election of the “National Dish.” Although the minister claimed that this was motivated by a desire to make “ordinary Danes” attend more to the quality of their food,³ a discourse of national values dominated the entire process. And of course, food has previously been shown to participate in nation-building (Appadurai 1998; Wilk 2006). Based on nominations from the public, ten dishes were selected for the competition. Of these at least seven included pork, and a pork-based dish—fried pork with parsley sauce (*stegt flæsk med persillesovs*)—ended up as the national dish. Somewhat to my surprise, pork roast was not among the top ten dishes; it certainly could have been.

A related cultural initiative was launched in 2016. The new minister of cultural affairs (Bertel Haarder, from the liberal party Venstre) wished to create a canon of Danish values (*Danmarkskanon*),⁴ and again, the public was invited to participate by coming up with responses to the following question: “What societal values, traditions or movements, which have shaped us in Denmark, do you want to bring into the future society?” The ten final values did not include food—notice that the initiative explicitly targeted immaterial culture—but food and consumption were nevertheless included in many suggestions sent to the Ministry, which were still available on its website as of July 2019, such as liberal Danish alcohol culture (and even drunkenness). Pork and pork-based foods, or “traditional

3. At the same time, I wonder if this election also aimed to support the elevation of traditional Danish food into a “cuisine,” both because other nations have cuisines (Mintz and Dubois 2002, 24), and because of the fame of the so-called New Nordic Cuisine. Interestingly, this New Nordic Cuisine has no “Old Nordic Cuisine” to be compared with.

4. See <http://kum.dk/temaer/danmarkskanon/>.

Danish food” (which is often pork-based) surfaced numerous times. One suggestion is particularly explicit on the motivation behind the pork-related suggestions:

I suggest pig breeding [as a national value or tradition] because it is a worthy/dignified way to provide for oneself and one’s family. In addition, it has given Denmark REALLY a lot of jobs, and not the least it has given the Danes a fantastically tasty raw material in line with beef, but at the same time a sensible alternative to goat for instance. The Danes are famous in the entire world for our high quality of pork and I will go as far as saying that this contributes to defining us as the human beings that we are.

It is argued that pork is important to Denmark and Danishness because of its status in the nation’s economy. Pork production is a morally correct way for the individual to participate in the work force, or even create sufficient surplus to provide for others, and pork is materially connected to the Danish territory because of its status as “raw material.” Overall, pork is naturalized as a Danish value. To the author, apparently an ordinary citizen, of the suggestion quoted above, pork has made the Danes who they are, and in this way, they are intrinsically—existentially, iconically, and unavoidably—connected to pork.

The understanding that pork is integral to traditional Danish food is regularly used in processes of othering, to (re)produce differences between the categories of Danes and immigrant recursively. This happened with full force during the so-called Meatball War (*Frikadellekrigen*). The Meatball War is named after the Danish meatball, made of pork and veal, which became a metonym for several struggles regarding food, again with pork as indexical (and a metonym) of Danish values. The Meatball War, which concerned a perceived need to preserve what some see as Danish core values by resisting foreign influence, culminated in January 2016, when a regional municipal council dominated by the Danish People’s Party decided by vote that all public preschools had to serve pork. The practice of eliminating pork from the menu, or just of offering the children a different choice of food, was construed as an unwelcome accommodation to Muslim children. One dominant strand in the circulating responses to this decision was a defense of the right to eat pork. For example, it was claimed that the council’s political intervention was a demonstration of due care: “it is certainly those who have come to this country that should adjust.”⁵ What the adjustment was supposed to entail is not entirely clear from this quote, but many

5. Kenneth Kristensen Berth (member of Danish People’s Party), *Ekstra Bladet* (Copenhagen), January 21, 2016.

others argued that immigrants to Denmark should eat pork because it is part of Danish food culture. In other words, immigrants must assimilate in terms of food. A prominent public right-wing populist debater articulated the moral panic around and criticism of those fellow-citizens (“we”) that have failed in their cultural duties: “Everybody ought to eat meatballs when it is served, but we don’t have enough cultural self-esteem to claim such a wholehearted integration.”⁶ Ironically, the “we” does not include the writer who is defending those cultural values. Other commenting voices took a different route by downplaying the danger of the food: “There has never been anyone who was harmed by eating a meatball, a hot dog [in Denmark containing pork based sausages] or a slice of *rullepølse* [traditional pork-based charcuterie].”⁷ The collapse between the symbolic and material aspects of food is clear here, and it is probably the symbolic dimension of the food that is intended when pork is argued to be harmless. (There are numerous instances of people who have fallen ill from consuming pork-based products, which are known to be sources of listeria infections, etc.) Some people argued that the initiative was meant to protect the Danes and “ensure that everybody who wishes to eat pork can get it everywhere” rather than attempting to “force-feed anybody with pork.”⁸ This is a less aggressive move but still part of the discourse of moral panic where the Danes and the traditional ways of being a Dane are under attack and therefore in need of protection. Last, some saw it as “disgraceful” that something which had always been “innocent” (that is, pork) was “suddenly surrounded by an entirely new feeling of being forbidden and unwanted.”⁹ The author of this quote will not accept that other people hold an oppositional understanding of a cultural phenomenon, and that this may lead to the feeling of shame. Overall, some Meatball Warriors felt that in order to show respect for the Danish host country, Muslims, here Muslim children, had to eat pork; conversely (not illustrated here), it was articulated as a right and even an obligation for Danes to serve pork in order to demonstrate alignment with Danish values. When people who fit the stereotype of a Dane disagreed, they were said to be naïve and stupid, and to sell out Danish values.

Other responses to the political initiative were ironically ridiculing the importance attached to pork by many Danes. A couple of examples suffice here to illustrate, such as the following excerpt from an editorial: “What is it about pork that makes it so important to eat? . . . When some people talk about it,

6. Sørine Gotfredsen, *Ekstra Bladet* (Copenhagen), January 15, 2016.

7. Frank Norgaard and Kashif Ahmad, *B.T.* (Copenhagen), January 20, 2016.

8. Christian Brøns, quoted in Torben Rask, *Ekstra Bladet* (Copenhagen), January 20, 2016.

9. Morten Rasmussen, *Kristeligt Dagblad* (Copenhagen), January 21, 2016.



Figure 2. Social media meme comparing the Minister of Integration with a *hamburgerry*.

one ought to believe that it was a sort of sacred food, which you have a religiously conditioned and national plight to consume. It is regarded as such an important component of our popular (*folkelige*) life that you may actually wonder why you do not demand the annoying slice of cardboard served at the Communion be replaced by the meatball.”¹⁰ The comparison between a food item, the discourse of national values under threat, and a sacred sphere turns the case into mockery of the pork-promoting nationalists. After all, the pig is not a sacred animal in Denmark, after all, being Danish is not a religion. The editorial also articulates nationalism—formulated through the assertion of food as national and cultural values—as almost as esoteric and irrational as religion. At the same time, the editorial walks a dangerous line by introducing religion, as it is far too easy to construe the conflict as based on religion. A humorous take on the Meatball War came from a social media meme where the Minister of Integration (Inger Støjberg, from the liberal party Venstre) was compared to an old-fashioned pork dish *hamburgerry* (fig. 2). Her strong anti-multiculturalist and anti-immigration stance was treated as identification with pork, this identification being underlined visually. Although the central status of food (and pork in particular) for the definition of

10. *Information* (Copenhagen), January 30, 2016.

Danish values was (and is) contested, a strongly essentialized, indexical association between eating pork and being Danish was validated. Pork had become a quality of being Danish, it had become iconized. In contrast, in this nationalist discourse Danes that do not eat pork are subject to erasure, as are immigrants that do eat pork, and thereby differences between “Danes” and “non-Danes” or “immigrants” are reduced to this one fragment. In other words, differences between people are simplified and recursively reproduced in terms of food, and as Mapes (2018, 282) remarks, it is clear that food ideology is not as much about regulating food as much as about disciplining eaters.

To end this section, I will add a linguistic note. Danish presents a different conceptual structure in the porcine field than English. The main lexical distinction in Danish is between *svin* and *gris*. *Svin*, cognate of English *swine* ‘pig/pork’, is conventionally used to refer to almost anything related to the production of meat or to the meat itself, thus *svinekød* ‘pork’ and *svineproduktion* ‘pork production’. Traditionally and conventionally *svin* is a neutral designator, at least in this usage. Another use of *svin* carries negative and moral associations, as it is used to devalue and condemn somebody’s actions, as is very clearly illustrated in the constructions *svin* ‘male chauvinist pig’, *dovent svin* ‘lazy pig’, and *miljøsvin* ‘environmental pig’. In contrast, *gris* ‘pig’ is traditionally used only to refer to animals, and it carries a more positive meaning. Piglets are *smågrise*, and marzipan figurines made at Christmas are *marcipangrise*. As an almost minimal pair, *grisebasse* is used to address children, a term of endearment referring to how children tend to make themselves dirty, whereas *svineri* refers to a serious, morally reprehensible, intentional mess or transgression. Yet the lexical field is undergoing changes. Now *gris* is beginning to be used to refer to pork, for example, *grisekød* rather than *svinekød*, perhaps to avoid the negative connotations of *svin* (see also Levisen 2013). In a market-oriented response, the national large supermarket chain COOP recently phased out the use of *svin* for pork on their labels because “young people want recipes with *gris*” (Abildgaard 2017).

Pork and Pigs in Urban Fieldwork

I will now proceed to the three field studies. All three sites are located in Copenhagen, and all three studies are based on fieldwork, audio recordings, and interviews.

Lunch Boxes and Pork in an Urban Kindergarten

In 2010–12, I spent time in a class of school starters. In Denmark, children generally bring lunch from home, and in this classroom there was a focus on

healthy food. In other publications, I have argued that teachers created a health register comprising certain food items, notably rye bread and milk (Karrebæk 2012, 2014), and that health became a proxy for issues of ethnic and cultural diversity. By focusing on health, teachers could socialize the children into culture-specific foods that were treated as merely healthy and thus neutralized in terms of cultural ideology. These practices were assimilatory. Alternative food registers were not mentioned in official (teacher) everyday discourse. In addition to rye bread, pork was a sorting mechanism, dividing children into the categories of Danes and immigrants. Pork was never explicitly mentioned as healthy. Yet, because only the health register was made explicit in the classroom, the children drew heavily on it when trying to make meaning of their food practices in public. For instance, in one exercise the children were asked to divide food items into two categories—healthy and unhealthy—by gluing pictures onto place mats. All the placemats I succeeded in getting (all from children whose background was ethnically Danish) had pork products glued on the healthy side (see fig. 3). And although the production of the place mats is worthy of an entire study in itself, for this purpose it illustrates the understandings available to the children.

We see more nuances when we look at children's meaning-making processes through their conversations, such as the conversation about food preferences, shown in example 1, between students Oliver (Danish background),



Figure 3. Examples of students' placemats: at left, healthy (with several pork products); at right, unhealthy.

Muna (Somali background), Zaki (Somali background), Anton (Danish-Chinese background).¹¹ In the excerpt below, Oliver argues with Muna, who claims that all Danes eat pork:

Transcript 1. All Danes eat pork

01 Oliver:	svinekød (.) og jeg vil ikke ha den.	pork (.) and I don't want it.
02 Muna:	ik ha svinekød du ka ik bare li Mia er	not have pork you just don't like Mia is
03	dansker hende ka du li::	Danish you like her.
04 Oliver:	nej!	no:!
05 Muna:	xxx spiser svinekød og alle spiser	xxx eat pork and everybody eats pork.
06	svinekød.	
07 Oliver:	nej.	no.
08 Muna:	yes.	yes.
09 Oliver:	er det ik rigtig alle spiser ik svinekød.	isn't it true everybody doesn't eat
		pork.
10 Muna:	xxx	xxx
11 Zaki:	adv	yuck
12 Anton:	adv det en orm	yuck it's a worm.
13 Zaki:	en orm adv hihi.	a worm yuck hehe.
14 Muna:	næh det bare svinekød.	no it's just pork.

In this example, different themes are debated at the same time, yet a central issue is whether Danes have a general preference of pork. The other main issue of concern—Oliver's soft spot for the classmate Mia—receives a more implicit treatment. Both topics coincide in Muna's teasing of Oliver, and whereas it is unsurprising that the six-year-old boy denies his romantic preferences, it is less expected that he also refuses his preference for pork. The point is that regardless of Oliver's denial, and its situational motivation, Muna has taken up an association between pork and Danes. I have no evidence that this association was made available explicitly by anybody, and although it cannot be ruled out that this point has been made to her, I see Muna's understanding as grounded in her daily experience of co-occurrence. Many of the majority-Danish children's sandwiches had pork products as a topping. Oliver too enjoyed (a very traditional and ordinary lunchbox content of) pork-based liver pâté and cold cuts on rye bread on an everyday basis. The example shows how Anton, Zaki, and Muna also create a different association to pork as they compare it to a worm, leading to expressions of disgust. Anton did eat pork (see example 2), but Muna and Zaki, who came from Muslim families, did not, and they formulated pork as dangerous or unsafe on several occasions. This is not too far from creating it as gross.

11. All participants are anonymized.

So, children encountered pork daily, and some of the children created an understanding that pork was related to Danishness and Danes. For some children, pork was not considered real food, as it was associated with religious taboos—it was haram. A health register was in focus officially, yet many children considered halal and haram more important socially. Unfortunately, the teachers never discussed the difference between these food registers. Example 2, a conversation between Zaki, Anton, Muna, and their teacher Kristine, illustrates a wasted teaching opportunity:

Transcript 2. You die from pork

01 Zaki:	der svinekød i. (.) der svinekød i. (.)	there's pork in it. (.) there's pork in it. (.)
02	man må ik spise svinekød så xxx.	you're not allowed to eat pork then xxx.
03 Anton:	hva ka du så xx.	what can you then xx.
04 Zaki:	du dør.	You die.
05 Anton:	dør?	die?
06 Zaki:	mm.	mm. (confirming)
07 Anton:	er det rigtigt?	really?
.		
11 Anton:	øh (.) Kristine:?	eh (.) Kristine:?
12 Zaki:	jeg ka ik li svinekød.	I don't like pork.
13 Anton:	Kristine.	Kristine.
14 Kristine:	ja.	yes.
15 Anton:	øh Zaki sir at	eh Zaki says that
16 Zaki:	jeg ka ik li svinekød.	I don't like pork.
17 Anton:	han sir hvis man spiser svinekød	he says that if you eat pork
18	så dør man.	then you die.
19 Kristine:	øj det passer altså ik Zaki. (.)	nah that's not true Zaki. (.)
20	det gør det ik. (.) men hjemme	it isn't (.) but at
21	hos jer spiser I ik svinekød.	your place you don't eat pork.
22 Zaki:	det sir xx.	xx says that.
23 Kristine:	og det er oss helt i orden men man	and that is perfectly fine but you don't
24	dør ik af at spise svinekød.	die from eating pork.

Anton is eating a liver pâté sandwich that Zaki claims may kill him (line 04). Anton is alarmed and appeals to the teacher as the highest available authority (lines 11 and onward). The teacher Kristine calms Anton by refuting Zaki's claim, and she adds that she knows that they don't eat pork in Zaki's home (line 21). This puts Zaki in a morally weak position; he looks as if he is uninformed, perhaps mean (wanting to scare his friend), and living according to a mysterious principle (because how does it make sense not to eat pork if it is not dangerous?). In the teacher's formulation, Zaki's family becomes deviant. When she qualifies their choice not to eat pork as "perfectly fine" (line 23), she is saying that is an acceptable but not preferred or generally expected choice.

The discussion is abandoned, leaving both Zaki and Anton with no explanation of the difference in their food practices.

To sum up, in this classroom, pork emerged as somehow Danish, perhaps healthy, maybe dangerous. Overall, the indexical meanings of pork remained unclear, implicit, highly situational, and semi-individual. The teachers were not comfortable discussing the issue, and in particular the difference among the children's understandings was treated as a taboo. This could easily be an effect of widely mediated understandings of pork as Danishness which preceded these recordings and followed them with increasing force. In order to embrace all the children, many of whom had immigrant backgrounds, the teachers needed to find a nuanced way to formulate such fundamental differences in food ideologies. This was not an easy task, particularly in a societal climate where immigration was highly problematized.

High-Quality Pork at a Fine-Dining Restaurant

My next snapshots come from a high-end restaurant in Copenhagen, where I did recordings and interviews with my colleague Marie Maegaard in 2014 (Karrebæk and Maegaard 2017, 2019). Rather than branding itself as Danish, the restaurant used the Danish island of Bornholm as the suggested universe of interpretation. Yet Bornholm makes very little sense to the international guests, and in fact, even Danes do not find it evident what a Bornholmian restaurant experience involves. Denmark and Danishness thus remained the essential foundation and precondition for the restaurant's branding to make sense. Many international guests were referred here from their hotels when they asked for a Danish restaurant, and it was one of a relatively small number of upmarket restaurants that served a traditional Danish lunch (*smørrebrød*).

A good illustration of Danishness as a precondition of the restaurant's branding is the central use and position of pigs and pork. Pork seems a self-evident menu choice because of its central place in the traditional Danish kitchen and in the Danish cultural landscape (cf. Coupland's [2014a] dimensions of history and ontology); pork is also generally agreed (cf. Coupland's [2014a] dimension of consensus) to index embodied and tasty Danish authenticity, as already argued. Such relations were embellished through different types of storytelling at the restaurant. For instance, a poster asked the guests if they knew that the pigs were "made," that is, raised and slaughtered, as in the old days (again, a reference to tradition and historicity). But pork was used to point to more than Danishness. The reference to "the (good) old days" could be read as an anti-industrialization statement, and the restaurant had beautiful photos of pigs in a forest (see fig. 4)

which could be demonstrating similar concerns. In line with contemporary food trends, the pictures created visible ties between the pigs, a specific (and pretty) place, and the restaurant; locality and close connections between producers and consumers were in focus (Trubek 2007; Weiss 2016).

In addition to drawing on authenticity (history, ontology, and proximity) and general food trends, these pictures and texts distanced the restaurant from other societally recurrent meanings of pork, for example, pork as an index of industrialization and of animal abuse. In contrast to the example described by Cotter and Valentinsson (2018), in which contrasting meanings were reconciled to create the consumers of specialty coffee as both elite and socially conscious through *bivalent indexicality*, the task of this restaurant was to avoid or erase certain meanings entirely. This was accomplished by pointing to the oppositional value of these meanings: to erase images of industrial pigs, large-scale production, and environmental damage, the restaurant displayed happy pigs in natural environments, photographed by people involved with the restaurant, and invoked the idea of pigs slaughtered as in the old days.

In addition to these pictures and texts, staff interactions with guests also contributed to the restaurant's branding, as in example 3. When talking to guests, the waiter often situated the pigs at a particular farm, Vasagaard. This strategy drew on the understanding that a named place is better than an unnamed place (Johnston and Baumann 2015), and the naming of the place, in addition to the



Figure 4. A forest pig pictured in a high-end Copenhagen restaurant

restaurant's (also discursively made) connection with the farmer, created a less mediated link between restaurant and produce—in itself is a way of introducing authenticity in food(ie) discourse (Weiss 2016).

Transcript 3. The pig from Vasagaard

01	Guest 12:	og hva sir du til	and what do you say about the
02		hovedretterne hva hva er din	main courses what what's your favorite
		favorit	
03		[.]	
04	Henrik:	grisen!	the pork/pig!
05	Guest 11:	er den god	is it good
06	Guest 12:	aha	aha
07	Henrik:	ja skovgris [.] a:h den kommer	yes forest pig [.] a:h it comes
08		over fra noget der hedder	over from something which is called
09		Vasagård og det e:r	Vasagård and it i:s
10		langtidstilberedt nakke [.]	slow-cooked shoulder [.]
11		og så er der syltede kantareller	and then there's preserved
			chanterelles
12		og rødløg [.] kartoffelskum	and red onion [.] potato-foam

When asked about his favorite among the main courses (the choice being between beef, fish, and pork), the waiter responds without hesitation: “grisen” ‘the pork/pig.’ His choice of the term *gris* rather than *svin* in itself removes the animal far from conventional pig production (*svineproduktion*). The waiter qualifies the dish as based on meat from a “forest pig.” We are left to infer that this pig lived a happy forest life without facing the dangers associated with the pork industry; it was a ‘real pig’ (Weiss 2016). Last, Henrik locates the pig producer on a particular farm (Vasagaard). By introducing the specific origin and life circumstances, we are moved closer to the pig as a living creature, before it was turned into meat served for guests. It also suggests that this restaurant attends carefully to the produce used. Meat is not just meat, but rather comes from select animals that are retrieved from producers whom the restaurant owners know well. The close relation between restaurant and producer invites us to trust the source of the meat, and, as example 4 shows, the communicative strategies—the illustrative photographs and descriptions of well-cared for pigs who roam around in pastoral settings—seemed to succeed.

Transcript 4. We almost feel we know the pig

01	Henrik:	hva ø::hm [.] er det m med gris	what e::hm [.] is it m with pork/pig
02		[allesammen	[all of them
03	Guest 11:	[ja	[yes

Transcript 4 *(Continued)*

04	Henrik:	eller vil ah er der nogen øh (.) man	or do ah does anybody eh (.) you
05		ka (.) man <u>ka</u> godt ændre den til	can (.) you can change it to beef
		okse	
06	Guest 11:	jeg tar gris	I take pork/pig
07	Guest 12:	jeg tar [oss gris	I also [take pork/pig
08	Guest ?:	[nå øh	[well eh
		...	
12	Guest 12:	nu ved vi [jo/heller] ik hvor oksen	now we also don't know where the
			beef
13		kommer fra	comes from
14	Guests:	hahahaha	hahahaha
15		(.)	
16	Guest 11:	vi føler næsten vi kender grisen	we almost feel that we know the pig
17	Guest 12:	ja(ha)	ye(ha)ah

The waiter asks the guests to confirm their choice of main course. His own unmitigated preference of the pork dish (seen in example 3) seems to have convinced them—they are all in for pork. Guest 12 humorously adds that this is also because they don't know where the beef (another main course option) comes from, implying that this is good to know— and perhaps also that the waiter supplies them with too much information. Guest 11 continues within the same humorous line—suggesting that the waiter has provided them with excessive information in order to create this (transactional) authenticity—as he adds that they almost feel that they know the pig (line 16). Here “to know” suggests a personalized and (quasi-)human relation, which is unusual for pig-human contact and particularly so in an urban context. Also, knowing the pig is somehow at odds with its function as meat; people tend to dislike eating creatures with which they are well acquainted (cf. Weiss 2014), again probably an urban development. Nevertheless, this is all playful, accompanied by lots of laughter and friendly alignment between guests and waiter.

So, even though Danishness is not often mentioned at the restaurant, I have argued that it is a precondition for using pork as central for constructions of locality and (the invention of) tradition. Also, the constructions of the restaurant as an authentic Danish or Bornholmian fine-dining restaurant, through ontology, historicity, coherence, consensus, proximity, seasonality, appeared to work well, and even so well that in some of these examples, the guests show to be aware that authenticity is a transactional accomplishment rather than a preexisting ontological fact (Pietikäinen et al. 2016). At the same time, the restaurant staff needs to introduce the themes of animal well-fare and anti-industrialization,

thereby converting pork into an asset that adds value to the entire restaurant experience, rather than a sign of industrial animal abuse.

A Fast-Food Place: Pigs as Emblems of Denmark

Whereas the relation between Danish National Culture and the pig was mostly implicit in the two first ethnographic cases, in the third one it requires less inferencing. We stay within the restaurant business, now at a contemporary fast-food place in Copenhagen named *Grisen* 'The Pig.' I did a series of recordings at The Pig in 2016 where I talked to guests, interviewed the owners, and recorded service encounters. I returned a couple of times in 2017.

The Pig is a *grill-bar*. Grill-bars are generally known for poor food quality, a limited and set food choice combined with seemingly unlimited deep-frying. The grill-bar had its prime time in the 1970s, and its popularity has decreased for decades. This has left room for food entrepreneurs to reinterpret, modernize, and upgrade the cultural concept, a phenomenon that falls in line with a documented international food trend of reinterpretation, upscaling, and revaluation of what used to be generally understood as popular, old-fashioned, or low-brow food culture (Johnston and Baumann 2015). The Pig was certainly popular culture, but not in the sense of addressing lower social classes. It focused on home-made food based on good ingredients, thus appealing to a quality-conscious segment of the population. Most of the clientele could be characterized as stereotypical Danes, many in their early twenties, though older generations were also well-represented. In my interviews and observations, I saw office colleagues, students, people from the food business, and blue-collar workers, all getting their share of upscaled grill-bar food. Very few guests seemed to have a Muslim immigrant background, and of course the name of the place, The Pig, itself indicated who was not invited for dinner. In addition, The Pig was efficiently and insistently promoted as celebrating Danish heritage. The most popular menu choices were the pork roast sandwich (*flæsketegssandwich*) and the steak sandwich (*bøfsandwich*). Both were regular grill-bar menu items, and the pork roast sandwich had an additional indexicality of being traditional Danish food.

In terms of décor, the idea of Danish heritage was expressed through material objects that filled up the relatively small room (see fig. 5). Old, grand-parental tableware was mixed with new Danish designs; the furniture consisted of odd items; the red-and-white tablecloths were reminiscent of restaurants and pubs in an imagined past; and an old-fashioned plate-hanger held a few expensive contemporary reinterpretations of an old type of porcelain (*megamussel*) that



Figure 5. Grisen's Danish heritage-inspired interior décor (photograph courtesy of the author)

is a bestseller among young urbanites. The music was mostly Danish pop from the 1980s and 1990s. A framed picture of the Danish queen skiing (cut-out from a gossip magazine) looked like it came from the family album, thereby adding to the national favorite ambiance of *hygge* 'coziness, intimacy, conviviality.'¹² This was also indexed by the lit candles which in Denmark signify *hygge* rather than romance. In addition, representations of pigs were abundant, most of them humorous and stylized. None of these items belonged, or would normally be found together, in an original grill-bar.

A signed picture of Pia Kjaersgaard, the former leader of the Danish People's Party, also decorated the room. The owners said that they had "adopted" Kjaersgaard as a mascot, and they got her to open the restaurant officially, because, they claimed, they saw her as a symbol of Denmark in the good old days.¹³ But there is more to this. One of the original co-owners, Umut, has Turkish background; he arrived in Denmark at age 11. As national background is generally regarded as a crucial index of belonging and legitimacy, Umut's Turkish origin is hard to overlook when compared to Kjaersgaard's nationalist political agenda, which invites strong reactions not the least in the culturally diverse neighborhood of the restaurant. Due to his immigrant background, Umut is unlikely to be taken for a Danish nationalist, but his invitation to Kjaersgaard could be interpreted as mocking other people's resentment, treason against his own (cultural, ethnic) background, or

12. See, e.g., the description of *hygge* in Anna Altman, "The Year of Hygge, the Danish Obsession with Getting Cozy," *New Yorker*, December 18, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-year-of-hygge-the-danish-obsession-with-getting-cozy>.

13. Kjaersgaard returned at a later occasion for a television program to discuss Danishness as a value and practice with another politician.

naïve cultural submission. It could also be understood as a demonstration of the constructed, changing, multisided, and negotiable character of national culture in contrast to the standpoint associated with Kjærsgaard, and thus mocking her. Although Umut orients to an interpretation of Danish traditions which is close to that of Danish People's Party, he and his partner also insisted on their right to be part of (re)interpretations of Denmark and Danishness. "Nobody can patent Danishness," as the other co-owner Katrine said.¹⁴ Although it was not entirely clear what she intended to convey with this statement, it demonstrated a certain understanding of the variability, malleability and situational embeddedness of the concept of Danishness (cf. Cavanaugh 2007).¹⁵ Overall, this sort of reflexive double-voiced, even parodic, discourse (Bakhtin 1981), where incongruences are drawn to people's attention, was very typical of The Pig.

It is worth pointing out that the restaurant is named *Grisen* and not *Svinet* (which both translate as 'the pig'). Katrine explained to me that *Grisen* sounded neutral, nicer, even slightly submissive, whereas *Svinet*, to her, signaled something dirty and arrogant, as if the owners did not care about people's opinion. *Grisen* goes much better with a "traditional Danish grill-bar," she said: "we are also called traditional Danish grill-bar, right? (.) *Grisen* traditional Danish grill-bar." Once again, her intentions remain opaque, but we can see how she has taken up the recent negative associations of the term *svin*. As the owners' aim was to promote the image of "the good old days" and to be associated with quality food, such associations introduced an incongruent meaning.

In response to my questions regarding his choices of restaurant type (grill-bar), name (*Grisen*) and the brand value (Danishness), Umut pointed out that these choices attracted attention in a saturated field of cosmopolitan, contemporary, fast-food places. As he put it (see example 5), in contrast to the numerous burger restaurants, he made a grill-bar, a Danish institution, while being Turkish. The insistence on difference, even tension, between meanings perceived as oppositional, would be seen as funny and attract media coverage:

Transcript 5. The pig and the Turk

01	Umut: hvis jeg nu åbnede en normal burgerbar	if I opened a normal burger bar
02	(.) så ville jeg jo være blevet	(.) then I would just have become
03	en af de mange (.) men åbner jeg	one of the many (.) but if I open
04	en grillbar og kører på det he:r	a <i>grillbar</i> and runs with a:ll this
05	alt hvad der er dansk o:g i min	all Danish a:nd in my

14. Rasmus Kramer Schou, AOK, *Berlingske* (Copenhagen), May 2015.

15. Kjærsgaard can also exploit Umut to counter accusations of racism. He is easy to represent as the perfectly integrated poster boy.

06	indretning og musikken og	decoration and the music and
07	stemningen og kalder den Grisen	the atmosphere and calls it The Pig
08	og jeg så selv er tyrker	and then I myself am Turkish
09	de:t altså det får jo nogen	i:t well it does make some people
10	til og tænke det meget sjovt	think this is rather funny
11	det s sådan så får man det lidt	it's then it's a bit
12	nemmere ved og komme ud	easier to reach
13	til nogen øh	some people eh
14	Aut: så du bruger også det at du er tyrker	so you also use the fact that you are Turkish
15	Umut: jamen selvfølgelig	but of course

Umut is strategic, and he exploits people's assumptions of Danishness and Turkishness in order to promote the restaurant. He uses objects that signal Danishness through their association with grandparents or the good old days. He believes that humor is a good marketing strategy, and he knows the Danish preference for pork. Moreover, the pig is an emblem of Danishness (see example 6). Again, the perceived contrast to his Turkish, and Muslim, background makes a unique selling point:

Transcript 6. The most Danish animal

01	Umut: engang imellem spør folk sån	once in a while people ask like
02	hvorfor hvorfor hvorfor kalde det	why why why name it
03	Grisen og sån noget men det	The Pig and stuff like that but it's
04	jo (.) det oss fordi gris er jo dansk	(.) it's also because pig is Danish isn't it
05	Aut: ja	yes
06	Umut: altså der ik nogen andre dyr der	so there are no other animals that are
07	mer danske jo svaner men men	More Danish well Swans but but
08	Aut: der er	there's
09	Umut: men men gris er bare så dansk	but but pig is just so Danish

To Umut, the pig is the quintessential Danish animal. Although he often insisted that his Turkish background could create a humorous effect when put next to these Danish meanings, he made it clear that this playfulness was not always well-received within the immigrant community (by “some Turks whom I know”). But he argues that the perceived discrepancy between Turkishness and pork is exaggerated. Turkish businesses have always sold pork.

Umut's media strategy worked, and he has become a media favorite as of 2021. At some point, he cooked on the most-watched morning television show, and in December 2016 the promotional magazine of the quality-oriented supermarket chain Irma featured him, along with other star chefs, creating pork-based recipes (see fig. 6). In 2019, the national television station ran a short series on

Umut and his life; he appeared in the last season of the television show *Dancing with the Stars*; and today (2021) he is still all over the news. But in 2016, before he was rocketed into nationwide fame, I wanted to know more about the restaurant guests' uptake of Umut's strategy. I asked a number of them why they had come to The Pig, and what they thought of it. They responded in remarkably similar



Figure 6. Grisen photoshoot for the supermarket chain Irma (reproduced with permission from Umut Sakarya).



Figure 7. A pork roast sandwich from Grisen (reproduced with permission from Umut Sakarya).

ways (see example 7). Many came for the pork sandwiches (“I just love pork”) (see fig. 7). Almost all of them described the place as *hyggeligt* ‘cozy, convivial, warm’ (see fig. 8). *Hygge(ligt)* was combined with other adjectives such as homely, old-fashioned, Danish, and authentic, and the decorations were seen as “different,” that is, unconventional, atypical. The queen, the tablecloths, and the candles were mentioned as signs that generated these understandings. Umut’s Turkish background was never taken up:

Transcript 7. Hygge and Danishness

01	Guest1:	jeg synes her er hyggeligt	I think it’s cozy here
02	Aut:	hva er det der gør her hyggeligt	what is it that makes it cozy here
03	Guest1:	jamen ah de:t det jo: det jo	but a:h i:t it’s it’s it’s
04		den måde som: det arrangeret på	the way i:t’s arranged
05	Aut:	ja	yeah
06	Guest1:	det der sån lidt gammeldags så øh	it it’s like a bit old-fashioned so eh
07		du kan genkende skabene	you can recognize the cup-boards
...		...	
12	Guest2:	åh hvad kan vi sige dansk (.)	oh what to say Danish (.)
13		danskhed	Danishness
14	Aut:	dansk	Danish
15		(.)	
16	Guest2:	xxx	
17	Aut:	mm (.) så hva	mm (.) like what
18		hvordan kan du se det	how can you see it
19	Guest2:	ø:h Dronningen hænger lige bag	e:h the queen is hanging right behind
20		dig o:g der er jagt	you a:nd then there is hunt
21		o:g de gamle (.) me: (.) duge	:nd these old (.) me: (.) table-cloths

Det var så den søndag, vi ses igen i morgen kl 16:30 🥰❤️ #grisen
 #køredenservice #søndagshygge #mormorstilen #gilf #flowers #copenha
 #danish



👍 Synes godt om 💬 Kommenter ➦ Del

👍❤️ 23

Figure 8. Grisen's *hyggeligt* atmosphere (reproduced with permission from Umut Sakarya).

Guests mentioned authenticity to express that the restaurant had a particular line (Goffman 1967) which they saw as “natural.” It stayed “true to itself” and to its allegiance to Danishness. The guests experienced coherence between the food, the decorations and the music.

To wrap up on this case, The Pig was in the market of pork roast sandwiches and Danishness. The Pig's commodified Danishness was a reflexive and intentional creation, and its success depended on the uptake and recognition of the strategic and well-manufactured assemblage of signs, the co-occurrence of which mutually constrained each other. Kjærsgaard may signal right-wing nationalism or populism, and the food was a reinvention of former bad taste. When juxtaposed, these features indexed the place as Danish and *hyggelig*, rather than as Danish and immigrant-hostile. Pork became associated with this sense of Danishness, as cozy, tasty, warm, and traditional; pigs become good, Danish animals, which provide good-tasting meat. It is unclear whether the main part of the clientele realized that they played a role in Umut's theater. They came to a safe space where pork was protected, and you would never be shamed for ordering it. The Pig welcomed all guests—regardless of social background—who accepted this precondition. The contemporary food scene's well-described appreciation of former low-brow culture (Johnston and Baumann 2015) was in this case was reflected by the variety of guests I met there. But The Pig did something more than paying homage to and revitalizing popular culture. Clearly Umut used the privileged Danes both to create a position for himself in Denmark and to create ironic distance. At The Pig, "status is asserted or contested both through the materiality of food (i.e. its substance, its raw economics, and its manufacture or preparation) and through its discursivity (i.e. its marketing, staging, and the way it is depicted and discussed)" (Mapes 2018, 265). Umut deliberately drew pigs into a political minefield in which they signified a perceived contrast between immigrants and Danes. Notice that I do not claim that Umut accepted or adopted the nationalist standpoint of Danish People's Party, or any other anti-immigration discourse. What I claim is that he capitalized on their existence and prevalence and that he chose to align with parts of them—although he continues to make his own standing point clear when people categorize him as the "model immigrant."¹⁶ Because of his immigrant background, he could play around with Kjærsgaard's meaning potential, and he could do it without being accused of nationalism. This playfulness was a media strategy that attracted attention through the creation of humorous effects, but it was not made relevant among the guests. Here pigs and pork were foregrounded in terms of food and taste, but their value as symbols of Danishness remained implicit and unrealized.

16. It would take me too far to describe examples of when and how, but Umut continues, as of 2021, to distance himself from the racists and discourses that wish to align him with the docile, well-assimilated immigrant. Umut's ways of doing this win him many followers and offend a probably even larger number of people.

Conclusion

Pigs and pork are material objects which link up to culturally and linguistically significant meanings. In the pork roast, material and symbolic dimensions fuse. The bodily incorporation becomes more than a biological fact, and what is incorporated symbolically varies with the sign value of the roast.

In this contribution I have looked at creation and negotiation of meaning of pigs and pork in media and in conversational encounters. I have shown how different meaning relations and cultural registers emerge depending on the situation, and in each case only part of the meaning potential of pigs and pork is made relevant. I have also focused on some of the moral and ideological aspects of meaning and language-in-use. We have seen how people use pigs and pork to index health, haram, disgust, danger, authenticity, tastiness, tradition, territory, terroir—and Danishness. Other meanings will be made relevant in other situations. Surely one is confronted with industrialization, food safety and animal abuse very often when pork is at issue. But in addition to the situationally embedded meanings, there are commonalities and connections across examples. To tease out these commonalities I have compared studies of face-to-face encounters to each other as well as to media data. Media data enable us to understand some of the transformations within the porcine field from a societal perspective and to understand how meanings and ideologies get distributed and shared across different communities and communicative encounters in Denmark. As Milani and Johnson (2010, 5) pointed out, the “media . . . open up discursive spaces . . . thereby giving a public voice to a variety of social actors who compete with each other in staking various claims regarding what counts as legitimate knowledge in the domain of language” (Milani and Johnson 2010, 5). Although I have not presented a full picture of media discourses on pork and pigs, the selected cases—the Meatball War, the election of National Dish, and the Denmark canon—are particularly significant because their political embedding opened up nationwide discursive spaces. In these cases, pork was treated as tradition and as Danishness, which was made clear explicitly, in metadiscourses, and implicitly, as subtexts and assumptions. Pork became a naturalized emblem of a historically anchored Danish culture and even of the Danish population. As the “ordinary citizen” cited earlier argued: “this contributes to defining us as the human beings that we are.” The relation between pork as a sign and Denmark or Danish culture was rationalized, justified, and naturalized through an emphasis of the shared qualities or the existential fact and causal connection. Sometimes pork was treated as a cornerstone of the Danish culture; we depend on pork to maintain the Danish culture and therefore it is our duty to serve and to eat it. Sometimes it

was treated as a bulwark against what was referred to as foreign influence; we have to serve pork in order to defend our concrete as well as existential border. Pork substitutes for the Dane, and when used to signify resistance against the Immigrant Other, this works through a semiotic process of erasure. Far from all immigrants uphold a pork taboo, and far from all Danes eat pork. There has even been a decrease in the social and market value of pork, and a rise in the number of vegetarians, due to the contested pork industry and the understanding of pork as fat(ening) meat. Through the semiotic process of recursivity, the pork-as-Danishness reproduces a well-known oppositional discourse dividing the world into us (the Danes) and them (the non-Danes) within the food area.

I have argued that mediatization leads to some meanings suggesting themselves regardless of the participants' immediate intentions. They sneak into daily life as a consequence of being broadcast and they may be perceived as uncomfortable and uninvited. This was illustrated by the initial vignette, in which a small Christmas event risked being hijacked by nationalist discourses. The mediated meanings can also be exploited for marketing purposes, as illustrated by the case of *The Pig*. The owner's Turkishness became relevant because pigs are seen as Danish and Turks are seen as non-Danish, sometimes even in opposition to the Danish values, and are associated with a pork taboo. The differences create incongruence, which the media took up and treated as surprising and funny. Whereas nationalist discourse, as we found it in the media data, was clearly a subtext at *The Pig*, this was less clear at the school and the fine-dining restaurant. Yet it is not at all irrelevant to the way that pigs and pork play a part at these settings. The public school is institutionally understood to be part of the societal imperative of socialization of children into Danish citizens, as illustrated by the Meatball War. National culture is rarely questioned, even in schools characterized by ethnic, linguistic, or social diversity. It is imposed (in the local interpretation of this construct) on children in more and less explicit ways, sometimes just by pointing to certain ways of being, doing and thinking—here, not eating pork—as deviant. At the fine-dining regional restaurant, guests pay to get a good restaurant experience, and they will have certain expectations in terms of food quality, food type, and organization of the experience. In contemporary fine-dining restaurants, authenticity is an oft-used essential aspect, a value-adding component, in the attempt to attract and satisfy guests. I argue, however, that it should be acknowledged how the preference for Danish authenticity or genuine Danishness is not neutral. After all, this is one component of what feeds nationalist sentiments found elsewhere. Also, there is a connection between the growth of the new Nordic cuisine and the emergence of a national celebration of

Danish food. Such connections between “authentic” Danish food and nationalism were not welcomed, intended, or encouraged at the fine-dining restaurant, just as they were not welcomed at the seasonal celebration, but the celebration of Danish food is nevertheless not far from examples of banal nationalism and use of seemingly innocent signs such as the Danish flag (Billig 1995; Jenkins 2012).

Mortensen (2020) calls for studies of sociolinguistic change to work with phenomena that are not “necessarily linguistic as such, but which nevertheless concern reconfigurations of language-society relations.” Food is an excellent place to find material for this. Similar to language, food is a triviality of the everyday, and it is also so much more than that—it is a signifier that is used to create identity and groupness. In terms of pork, it is a signifier that is undergoing change of its value. Mortensen points out that “language change and social change is experienced at once and as one process by language users” (2020). Perhaps a general societal increase in the attention to food has exacerbated the potential of pigs and pork to become national emblems of Danishness in an era of globalization, migration, nationalism and commodified authenticity. Meaning change is linguistic and societal, and in this case, the meaning changes are moral, too. Considerations of what to eat and serve or what not to eat and not to serve are deeply moral. This was shown in the school data, at the same time as these data demonstrated the difficulties that teachers met in a world where assumptions about the symbolic value of pork were no longer shared. It was also very clear from the Meatball War, where what food to serve was an issue of showing a particular national orientation.

The moral implications of eating pork touch on more than defending, attending to, or paying respect to Danish traditions. Alongside the discourse on national values, a discourse on industrialized pork, pigs as exploited victims of capitalist production, and pork as a sign of a global industrialization gone too far, takes place. This is only rarely mentioned by those promoting pork in the name of Denmark. I suggest that this is probably a driving force in the lexical change where *svin* is being replaced by *gris* in the marketing of pork, as illustrated by the name choice at The Pig as *Grisen*. Also, a fine-dining place needs to create a distance from industrialization in order to steer the guests’ attention in the right direction: towards pork as tasty tradition. However, the discourse on environmental concern and the one on Danishness are not irrelevant to each other when we discuss meaning changes in the porcine field. They intersect as a quintessential sign of Danishness has competing values and that these need to be circumvented, erased or avoided in order to make Danishness attractive, and this essential at an

upmarket restaurant. Surely, it is interesting to see how what used to be one of many signs of banal nationalism (Billig 1995), and an unnoticed way to create a sense of a connected, somehow coherent, cultural community, pork is now far from being such a banal, taken-for-granted, and unnoticed sign of the Danish culture. Pork has become a nationalist stronghold and a national battleground. It is contested as symbolic value as are the moral dimensions of its national economic value. So, to sum up, the porcine field is a battlefield where different interpretations compete. It is a transformative product (Cavanaugh 2007, 2016), which may turn us into particular types of people when eating it (Fischler 1988). The discursive engagements with pork and pigs analyzed in this contribution have demonstrated what types of people we imagine that people may become when eating it, and how these types are changing. Thus, meaning and meaning changes in the porcine field illustrates the construction of and the changes in society in Denmark today.

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